



VERMONT
COMMUNITY ACTION
PARTNERSHIP

- ❖ Tom Donahue, BROC Community Action (BROC)
- ❖ Alison Calderara, Capstone Community Action
- ❖ Paul Dragon Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)
- ❖ Jenna O'Farrell, Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA)
- ❖ Joshua Davis, Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)

Thank you for considering these requests, which would go a long way to addressing and preventing homelessness. These requests are from the VCAP full FY2027 request, and we think they are the requests directly related to H.594 and the goals expressed by the Human Services Committee.

At its heart, homelessness is a condition of poverty. The Vermonters we serve struggle to cover basic needs like housing, food and healthcare. As highly skilled anti-poverty strategists, the foundational expertise of Community Action Agencies is to help clients exit poverty and address barriers to long term stability and prosperity. This additional funding would allow us to expand our services statewide and bring consistency across the state around the homelessness prevention and intervention services we provide.

Here is a summary:

- Case Management/Housing Retention: \$500k
- Permanent Housing Navigators: \$1m
- Concrete Supports: \$1.25m
- HOME Voucher Program: \$1.5m
- Community Resource Center: \$650k
- HOP Financial Assistance: \$3,740,101 (this would be level funding)

TOTAL VCAP requests: **\$8,640,101 (\$4.9m above level funding)**

Case Management: \$500,000

- This would support 1 FTE at each Community Action Agency to increase capacity across the state for case management services. We have appreciated the ongoing discussion in your committee about the need for these services, and we agree.
- Case Management is a client-centered, holistic approach that coordinates services to help people secure stable housing and achieve stability. Case Managers assess needs, create personalized plans, provide advocacy and connect clients to services and supports.
- We know we are not meeting the need for case management, and this request will not fulfill all the need we see, but it will help to increase capacity across the state for Case Management services.

Permanent Housing Navigators: \$1 million

- This would support 2 FTEs at each Community Action Agency.
- Permanent Housing Navigators support clients in reaching their long-term housing goals. They help to assess their clients' barriers and then work with the clients to overcome the barriers and transition into permanent, sustainable housing.
- Housing Navigators can help with filling out applications for various subsidies and supports, federal or state benefit programs, or other resources, services and supports.
- Housing Navigators can also help if something happens to jeopardize the client's housing situation.



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Concrete Supports: \$1.25 million

- This funding would be shared among the 5 Community Action Agencies to provide direct support in times of acute need for individuals or households.
- All 5 Community Action Agencies receive federal funding for concrete supports and they also fundraise for this critical flexible funding. Still, the need is greater than the available resources.
- Concrete Supports can prevent homelessness by addressing an acute economic barrier before a household reaches a crisis situation.
- Concrete Supports can also help when a person is experiencing homelessness by providing needed supplies, clothing, hygiene kits, etc.

HOME Voucher Program: \$1.5 million

- HOME is a statewide program run by CVOEO. The HOME Family Housing Voucher Program is a rapid-rehousing program serving families with children experiencing homelessness.
- Current funding will only allow this program to continue through June 30, 2026, offering approximately 6 months of financial support to participants.
- The requested \$1.5m would support the 90 families currently in the program and allow us to offer vouchers to up to 45 more families for up to 24 months.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER: \$650K

- The CRC is located in Burlington and run by CVOEO. The funding also supports outreach efforts.
- The CRC is currently serving an average of 131 people every day, with 50% of the guests being strictly unsheltered.
- The CRC is a no-barrier shelter and is a vital component of Burlington's healthcare and public safety infrastructure. It is an essential part of the continuum of care for people experiencing homelessness.
- State funding is essential to maintaining daily operations, stabilizing staffing, and continuing to provide the lifesaving interventions the community relies on.

HOP FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – level funding - \$3,740,101

- The Housing Opportunity Program's Financial Assistance is designed to prevent people falling into unsheltered homelessness or to help people get into permanent housing. Financial assistance is provided to households who would become or remain homeless but for financial assistance.
- We are requesting level funding for the providers who offer this program.
- We have collectively seen a high level of demand for this program for years, and it is critical to helping people stay in permanent housing or move into permanent housing.
- Level funding will not meet the need, but it will at least help to continue to provide a level of support and help to prevent homelessness for those we can serve.



HOME Family Housing Voucher Program

P.O. Box 1603

Burlington, VT 05402

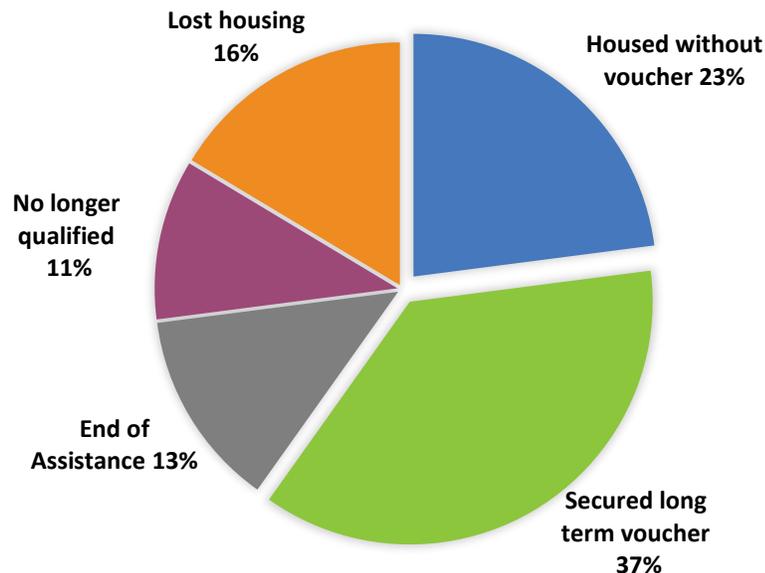
Ph. (802) 660-3455 Email: home.fhvp@cvoeo.org

The HOME Family Housing Voucher Program is a **rapid-rehousing** program serving **families with children experiencing homelessness**, and our original aim was to provide up to **200 families** up to **24 months of rental assistance**. Families are referred to the program through **Coordinated Entry**. The vouchers act as a vital bridge between homelessness and housing stability for our clients, supporting them temporarily while they work on long-term housing solutions and stability.

Participant Overview

To date **573 households** have applied to the program, representing **765 adults** and **1,028 children** statewide. Of those who were qualified, we provided financial assistance to **212 households**, or **273 adults** and **373 children**. Currently, **90 households** are still receiving assistance, and **122 households no longer receive assistance**. This shows that after being supported by the program, **60% of our participants were able to stabilize and self-sustained their housing cost with one family able to purchase a house**. Unfortunately, about **16% of clients have not had a positive outcome** such as lease non-renewal, eviction (cause or no cause), or loss of dependent children.

OUTCOMES





HOME Family Housing Voucher Program

P.O. Box 1603

Burlington, VT 05402

Ph. (802) 660-3455 Email: home.fhvp@cvoeo.org

Testimonials

“Without the voucher, I am not sure where they (the client) would have ended up – it certainly prevented them from being homeless or possibly even needing to leave Vermont. It made all the difference in the world for this vulnerable family. The HOME Voucher was a vital bridge to their new, stable life” – Jan Steinbauer, CASAN chair

“I’m very thankful and appreciative of the HOME voucher. It has given my family a place to live so we are not homeless, and it has made it so we continuously have somewhere safe over our heads” – client from St. Albans

“This family has benefited from the support of this voucher because their income has fluctuated and this voucher helped them sustain housing for the past few years. It also helped them save money and helped them understand what their budget needs to look like to sustain housing on their own” – Brenda Kingsbury, HPCVT Family Supportive Housing Coordinator

“It’s supposed to be a bridge, but I don’t know where it’s supposed to take them due to the lack of new vouchers and shortage of openings in subsidized buildings” – Holly Meyer, CSW Whole Family Housing Advocate • Chittenden Community Action

Continued Need

Current funding will only allow us to continue operating until **June 30, 2026, offering about 6 months financial support to participants**. Several pre-approved participants are not able to secure housing without an available full 12 months subsidy, hindering their journey towards possible housing stability. Indeed, most landlords are not willing to sign 6 months or less contracts. An additional **\$1.5 million** dollars of funding will support the program operations and provide assistance for the 90 families that we are currently offering financial assistance and providing vouchers for up to **45 additional families for up to 24 months** (including security deposits) including all administration costs.

This program has shown its effectiveness in addressing access to affordable housing and high possibility of attaining housing stability and sustainability through its embedded service support and education. Our request for 1.5 million in funding is crucial for its strengthening and continuation.

CVOEO's Community Resource Center 2026 Legislative Request: \$650,000 for FY27

CVOEO requests \$650,000 to support the Community Resource Center (CRC) and our critical homeless outreach operations for State Fiscal Year 2027. As the housing crisis in Chittenden County intensifies, the CRC remains a frontline sanctuary for Burlington's most vulnerable residents. We are currently serving an average of 131 people per day, with more than 50% of our guests being strictly unsheltered.

The CRC is more than a "drop-in center"; it is a vital component of Burlington's healthcare and public safety infrastructure. We save the state money by diverting individuals from emergency rooms and jails through on-site de-escalation, overdose reversal, and direct housing placement.

Over the past year, the CRC has faced a "perfect storm" of challenges: a growing housing shortage, long shelter waitlists, and the displacement of our physical space due to construction. Despite these pressures, our team remains an unwavering anchor for those with nowhere else to turn. **State funding is essential to maintaining daily operations, stabilizing staffing, and continuing to provide the lifesaving interventions the community relies upon.**

The CRC is often the only place where those experiencing chronic homelessness feel seen and safe.

- **Restoring Dignity:** Recently, Ryan, one of our Permanent Supportive Housing case managers, successfully housed a client who had been homeless for nine years. Even with a roof over his head, he returns to the CRC daily, stating, "I'm still going to come and check in with you guys because you're my friends."
- **Empowering Stability:** Eliza, a CRC staff member, recently assisted a household of two through a moment of crisis, helping them secure the vital documents needed to reclaim their lives. Days later, a CRC staff member encountered them working at a local business. The client insisted on providing a service for free, stating, "If it wasn't for your space and Eliza, my partner and I would be hungry and hopeless. You guys saved our life."
- **Crisis Intervention:** Our staff are trained first responders in the heart of the opioid epidemic. In a single two-week period, staff members Kolby and others reversed two on-site overdoses. Two neighbors are alive today specifically because our doors were open and our team was trained to intervene.
- **Safe Haven:** For those fleeing domestic volatility, the CRC is a known "safe zone." When a young woman entered our center fearing for her safety, our staff immediately de-escalated a physical confrontation, issued a no trespass order to the aggressor, and drove the survivor to a secure location. She told us through tears, "I knew if I came to the CRC, I would be safe."



The Department of Mental Health receives monthly data reports from the CRC team. The figures below summarize our services and supports over the past year:

- 2,152 unique individuals served.
- 23,570 total visits.
- 36,858 hot meals provided (self-funded by CVOEO).
- 168 individuals transitioned from homelessness to stable shelter or housing.
- 82 Coordinated Entry assessments completed.
- 249 direct referrals to medical and mental health services.
- 729 distributions of survival gear (tents, sleeping bags, handwarmers).
- 114 individuals assisted with vital documents (IDs, birth certificates, Social Security cards).
- 153 individuals provided transportation to essential appointments or housing opportunities.
- 447 hygiene kits distributed.
- Services delivered at 31 outreach sites, including encampments.

Who We Serve: Population Demographics

The population we serve faces significant barriers to traditional housing. Sixty percent of CRC guests have a formal disability diagnosis. Among those individuals:

- 38% have a mental health diagnosis.
- 31% have a physical health diagnosis.
- 29% have a substance use disorder diagnosis.

Age Breakdown

- Under 55: 68%
- Ages 55–61: 14%
- Ages 62+ (seniors): 11%
- 7% of data is missing, primarily from housed individuals who access the free breakfast program without entering the full tracking system.

Racial Demographics

- White: 87%
- Black: 11%
- Asian and American Indian: 2%



Please Level Fund HOP Financial Assistance in FY2027

The Housing Opportunity Program's Financial Assistance is designed to prevent people falling into unsheltered homelessness or to help people get into permanent housing. Financial assistance is provided to households who would become or remain homeless **but for** financial assistance.

Financial assistance may be used to meet a variety of essential needs, so long as it supports immediate housing stability for eligible households. In all cases, it must be determined that, **but for** financial assistance the household would become or remain homeless. Eligible expenditures include:

- Short-term, tenant-based rental assistance for up to 3 months
- Security deposits (including last month's rent), not to exceed the value of 3 months of rent
- Utility deposits (where it is standard practice by the utility)
- Rental arrears as a one-time payment, not to exceed the value of 3 months rent
- Program fees (one-time or up to 3 months) for recovery housing or other non-traditional housing option
- Transportation costs to live with family/friends, including in another region or state



The household must attest that they have not applied for and/or received any other federal or state funding to cover any financial assistance applied for under this program.

We have collectively seen a high level of demand for this program for years, and it is critical to helping people stay in permanent housing or move into permanent housing. If we do not collectively get an increase in funding for FY2026, we will run out of funding before the end of the fiscal year.





Please support VCAP's total budget request of \$11,625,000 to support low-income Vermonters with a full suite of services at all five Community Action Agencies.

This year, 43,000 low-income Vermonters will seek services and support for many issues through our statewide network. As Community Action Agencies, *our mission is to break the cycle of poverty for Vermonters who meet us in crisis.* We bring this mission to life with a continuum of services designed to lift vulnerable residents into lives of security and stability.

We are asking for additional state funding to increase our capacity across all 5 Community Action Agencies for three areas of our work:

- **Anti-Poverty Programs, Supports & Services (\$6.4 million)**
- **Benefits Assisters (\$600k)**
- **Homelessness & Housing (\$4.625 million)**



Community Action Anti-Poverty Programs, Supports & Services - \$6,400,000

This funding would supplement the federal flexible funding Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) that the Community Action Agencies (commonly referred to as the CAPS) receive. The CSBG's purpose is to support services and activities for individuals and families with low incomes that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities. This federal funding has been available for the CAPS since they were created with federal statute. The CSBG funding is very flexible and can be used in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the community that each CAP serves.

Because of increased costs for basic needs and federal impacts to programs and household budgets, the CAPS have seen significant increased need across all programs, services, and supports. Additional state flexible funding would allow CAPS to help individuals and families with the wrap-around anti-poverty supports and services that will best suit each client and would also provide a buffer against any new restrictions that may be put on their federal funding. Continued flexibility and ability to serve communities in the way that works best is critical.

The CSBG services and activities address employment, education, income and asset building, housing, nutrition, emergency services, and/or healthcare. Each CAP's specific services are based on community needs assessment for their coverage area. The community needs assessments are federally required and result in workplans that are approved by the State Office of Economic Opportunity.

The Programs, Supports & Services that would be funded by this request include:

- Financial Capabilities Program at all five CAPS
- Microbusiness Program at all five CAPS
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) at all five CAPS
- Statewide Community Action Family Resilience Fund – full suite of anti-poverty wrap-around services, including concrete supports for acute needs of individuals and families



Benefit Assister Services \$600,000

The new paperwork requirements for SNAP/3SVT and Medicaid could very well result in thousands of people *unnecessarily* losing these important benefits. In addition to the direct harm people will experience if they lose SNAP or Medicaid benefit, our state will also lose hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding that is only accessible through these federal programs. The CAPs want to be part of a statewide effort to ensure that every eligible person is getting the support they need to keep their SNAP and Medicaid benefits. This work will be ongoing to ensure that people are filing paperwork when it is required and that they have trusted staff people who they can turn to with questions or concerns. This work is not new to the CAPs, but we know that it will take additional capacity and dedicated time and attention to give people the support they need.

Homelessness & Housing Supports \$4,625,000

At its heart, homelessness is a condition of poverty. The Vermonters we serve struggle to cover basic needs like housing, food and healthcare. As highly skilled anti-poverty strategists, the foundational expertise of Community Action Agencies is to help clients exit poverty and address barriers to long term stability and prosperity. This additional funding would allow us to expand our services statewide and bring consistency across the state around the homelessness prevention and intervention services we provide.

The additional funding would be used for:

- VCAP planning capacity and robust data analysis, specifically to identify what is working to keep people housed after experiencing homelessness, and what might be causing people to fall back into homelessness
- Case Management/Retention Specialists
- Street Outreach and Case Management at the hotels and motels
- Mobile Home Caseworkers
- Landlord Liaisons
- Employment Coaches – Moving Vermont Forward
- HOME Family Housing Voucher (statewide)

